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HAS THE STRATEGIC VALUE OF GREECE CHANGED
BOTH IN A REGIONAL AND GLOBAL CONTEXT?

BY

COLONEL PANOS MANOLITSAKIS
Hellenic Army

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Unclassified

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE (When Data Entered)

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE		READ INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE COMPLETING FORM
1. REPORT NUMBER	2. GOVT ACCESSION NO.	3. RECIPIENT'S CATALOG NUMBER
4. TITLE (and Subtitle) "Has the Strategic Value of Greece Changed Both in a Regional and Global Context?"		5. TYPE OF REPORT & PERIOD COVERED Study Project
7. AUTHOR(s) COL Panos Manolitsakis Greece, IF		6. PERFORMING ORG. REPORT NUMBER
9. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME AND ADDRESS USAWC Carlisle Barracks, PA 17013		8. CONTRACT OR GRANT NUMBER(s)
11. CONTROLLING OFFICE NAME AND ADDRESS Same		10. PROGRAM ELEMENT, PROJECT, TASK AREA & WORK UNIT NUMBERS
14. MONITORING AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS (if different from Controlling Office)		12. REPORT DATE March 1990
		13. NUMBER OF PAGES 39
		15. SECURITY CLASS. (of this report) Unclassified
		15a. DECLASSIFICATION/DOWNGRADING SCHEDULE
16. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of this Report) Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited.		
17. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of the abstract entered in Block 20, if different from Report)		
18. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES		
19. KEY WORDS (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number)		
20. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number) This paper represents a review and strategic evaluation of the Hellenic Space (Land, Sea, Air) for NATO and the Western World. The following factors are discussed: a. The new relations between the two Superpowers. b. The new situation and changes in Eastern Europe and the Middle-East. c. The indisputable fact that today Europe could not survive without ensuring the free oil transportation from Middle East to her Territory.		

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Unclassified

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE (When Data Entered)

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Unclassified

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE(When Data Entered)

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Keynote: Report (EG)

Unclassified

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE(When Data Entered)

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USAWC MILITARY STUDIES PROGRAM PAPER

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"HAS THE STRATEGIC VALUE OF GREECE CHANGED
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AN INDIVIDUAL PROJECT

by

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U.S. Army War College
Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania 17013
March 1990

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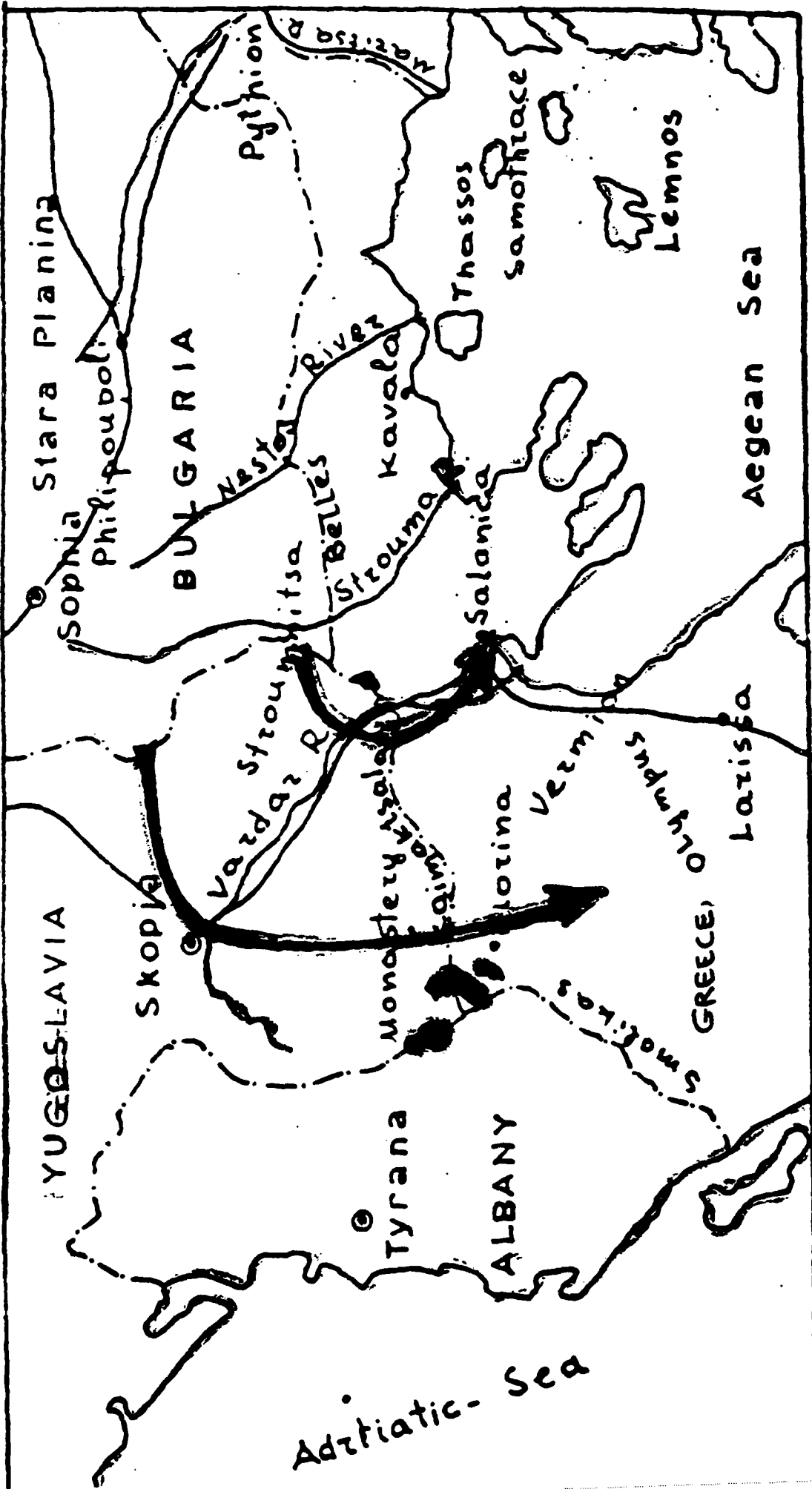
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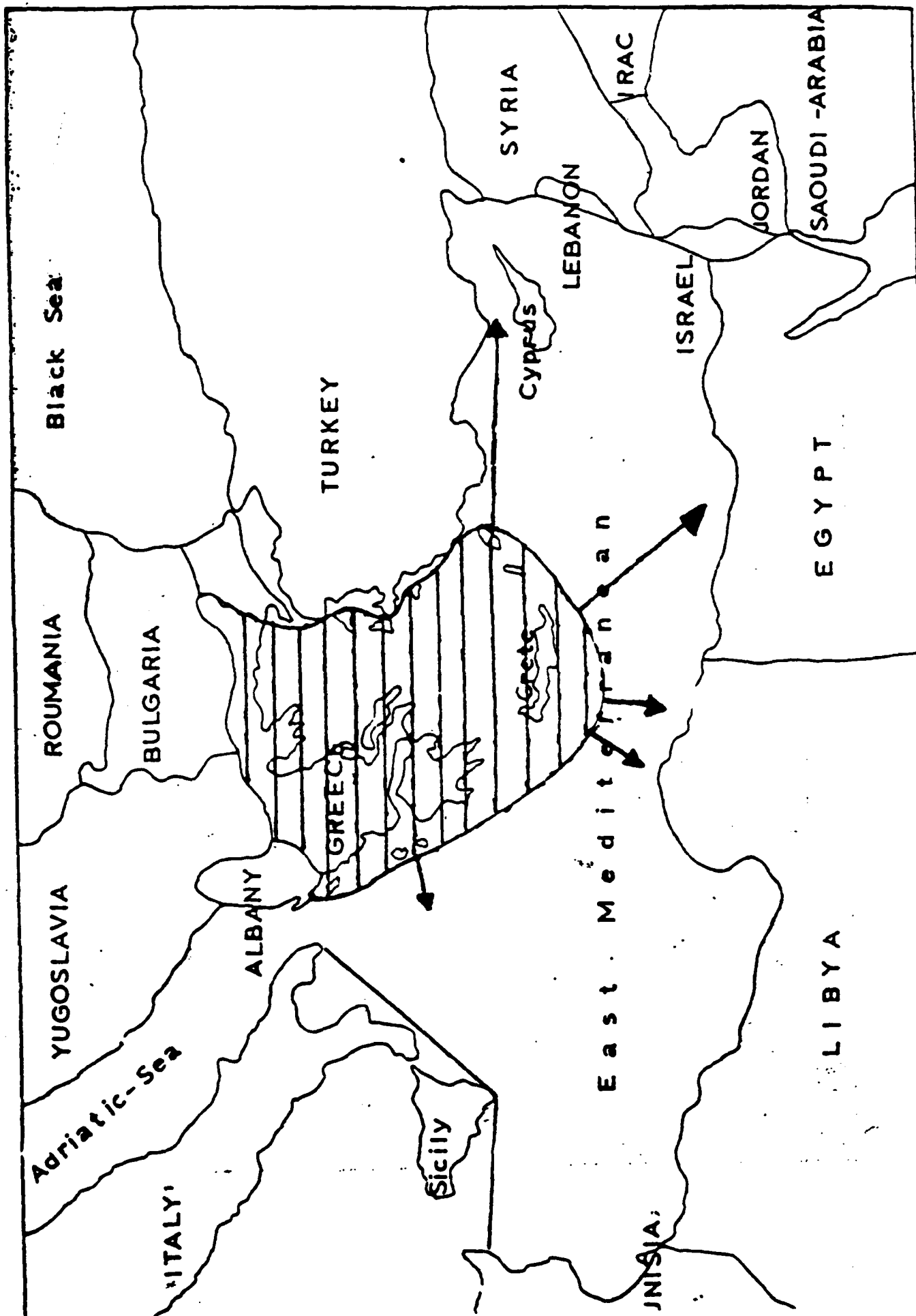
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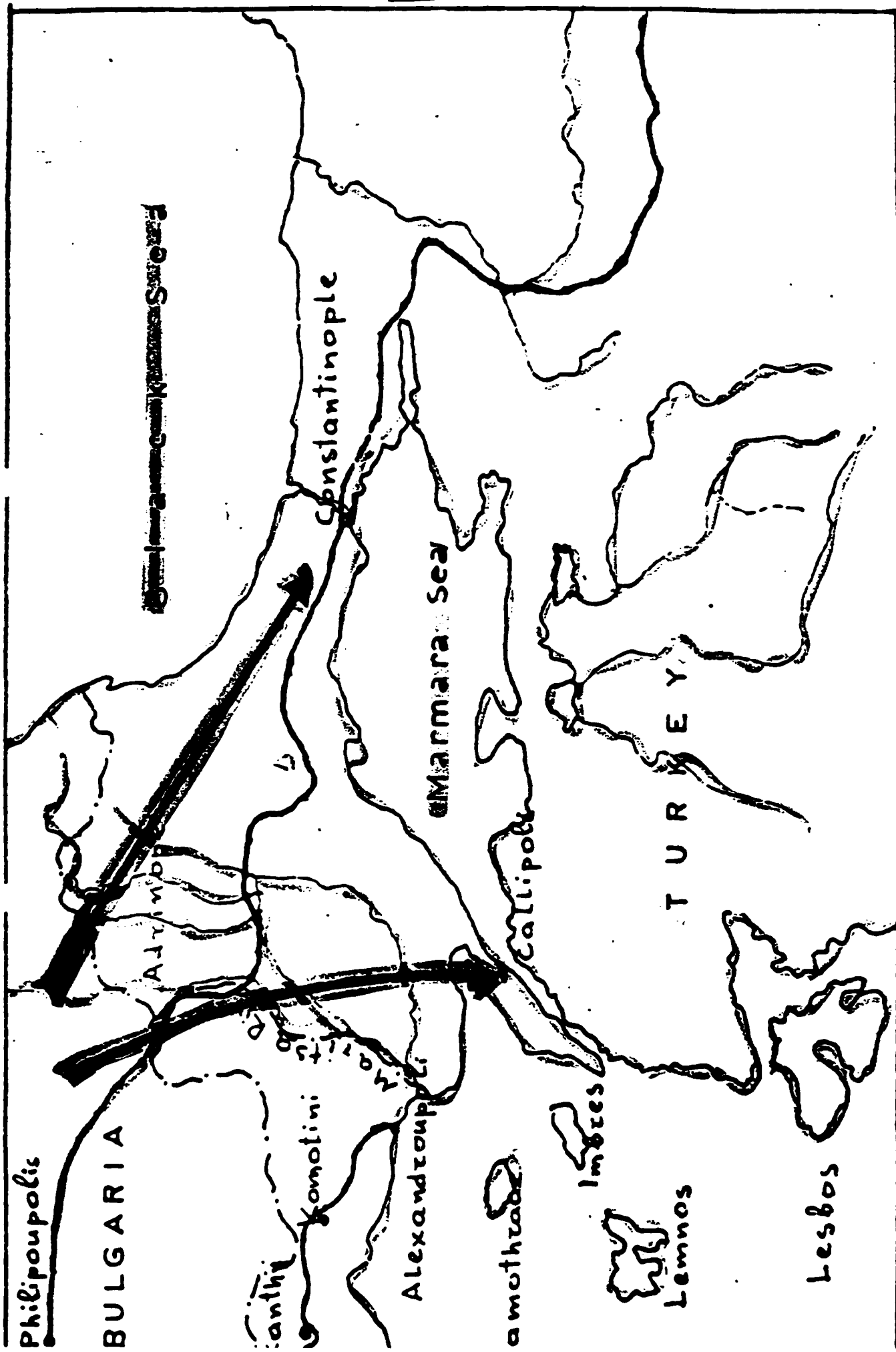
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Sketch 1





Sketch 3

ABSTRACT

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PAGES: 33

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This paper represents a review and strategic evaluation of the Hellenic Space (Land, Sea, Air) for NATO and the Western World. The following factors are discussed:

- a. The new relations between the two Superpowers.
- b. The new situation and changes in Eastern Europe and the Middle - East.
- c. The indisputable fact that today Europe could not survive without ensuring the free oil transportation from Middle East to her Territory. The Hellenic Land, Sea and Air Space constitutes a solid base of departure from which Allied Forces could be channeled rapidly, if necessary, to the Middle East and furthermore to the North, West or South. The paper concludes that the strategic value of the Hellenic Space (Land, Sea, Air) has increased considerably.

"HAS THE STRATEGIC VALUE OF GREECE CHANGED

BOTH IN A REGIONAL AND CLOBAL CONTEXTS?"

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The history of the Greek Nation is rooted in the begining of the ages. The Hellenic civilization was born in the Aegean and the surrounding area thousands of years before Christ. Since the second millenium B.C. many significant Hellenic cities appeared which enjoyed long periods of economic prosperity and cultural flourishing and structured the foundations of today's civilization.

Today's Hellenic territory - both the mainland and the insular complex - is what the Greek people have preserved in the long course of their History.

Greece faithful to the ideals and principles of Democracy, Freedom and National independence of the peoples, has participated in the two World Wars, on the side of the "Free World" and naturally participates today in most institutions and organizations which cherish the same principles.

In 1952, Greece became a member of the Council of Europe.

In 1952, a member of the Atlantic Alliance.

In 1962, an associate member of the European Economic Community and a full member on Jan 1, 1981.

From a geopolitical point of view, Greece covers an area of 132,000 square kilometers and has a population of approximately 10 million. This area also includes 3100 islands and islets, with about 2,300 of them lying in the Aegean Sea. Greece is geopolitically a significant link between Europe and Middle East and one of the world's most sensitive areas. Greece has 1,000 km of common borders with three Communist countries to the North, Albania, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria. It borders its NATO partner, Turkey, and it has an extensive sea boundary. Greece has an important role to play in the security of the Balkan and Mediterranean.

Greece's location has made it a natural bridge between Europe and Asia and Africa and its unique combination of mountainous and maritime geography has made it a center for the control of the eastern Mediterranean.

Greece spends a considerably larger portion of its gross national product - 7.2% in 1988 - and of its national budget -14,6% in that year- for defense than do other NATO countries. With its 10 million inhabitants, Greece is one of NATO's least populous countries and yet its armed forces number 210,000 men.

The Greek mainland, as was mentioned before, is mountainous and has its mountain ridges oriented from North to South; These ridges form

gaps between them which cross the borders and constitute the avenues of approach to Greece. It is along these Avenues of approach that the main Defensive Battles were fought in the past, and will be waged again in the future, should an attack be launched against this part of NATO. Today the likelihood of conflict between the Western World (NATO) and the Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact (WP) is perhaps as low as it has been at any time in the post-war era. There is no longer any question that significant, and in some cases, "Dramatic" changes (East Germany, Romania etc) are occurring in the W.P. "Perestroika" (or restructuring) reflects the economic adjustments and "Glasnost" (or openness) represents the political and social changes. Military changes are also quite evident.

However, although the WP effectiveness has significantly diminished, the threat and the Soviet interests will still remain.

Historically the main objective of the Soviet Union is obtaining its permanent goal (a goal pursued since the Tzars era), which aims at securing an outlet into the Mediterranean.

We should not forget that today despite of talks and announcements of military reductions, the Soviets and their Allies have a significant numerical advantage in both conventional forces and theater-nuclear forces over the NATO Alliance and that there is no guarantee that the Soviets will realize the ambitious goals they have set for "Glasnost" and "Perestroika".

The success of the Soviet reform effort - depending on how it develops - may also prove hazardous to Western Security. For example, if Gorbachev's economic reforms produce a reinvigorated Soviet technological and industrial base without a corresponding growth of democratic institutions and democratic pluralism, the West could face a far more formidable Soviet Threat than it does today. This threat would be even more dangerous if the West, in the interim, allows its warning and defense capabilities to atrophy.

The West must be patient and vigilant, while carefully examining Warsaw Pact military developments and bearing in mind that capabilities, not intentions, decide the outcome in battle. Given that NATO clearly should remain a viable organization in the near future, an essential instrument for promoting stability while WP countries attempt to reform their Political and economic structures. NATO, under this vision will continue to be the fundamental guarantor of the West interests, European stability, and continued peaceful relations between East and West.

The sensitivity and the instability in the area, because of the huge as well as difficult problems of the Middle East (Lebanon, Palestine, Cyprus, Terrorist activities etc) are of first priority factors for the security in the region.

From these points of view, the Hellenic Territory, as a decisive

factor of coherence and effective control in NATO south Region, is of great importance.

The apparent disbandonment of the WP and the emergence of Democratic Nations and somewhat pluralistic governments in Eastern Europe have caused the following consequences:

- a. Central Europe is becoming less of a traditional Threat.
- b. The Flanks - Norway, Greece and Turkey - are now closest to USSR's economic interests.
- c. Economics and Oil are becoming more important. That is why the line Italy - Greece - Turkey - Israel - Saudi Arabia is now more important.

Europe could not survive without ensuring the free oil transportation from the Middle East to her Territory. The Hellenic Land, Sea and Air spaces constitute the solid base of departure, from which Allied Forces could be channeled rapidly to the Eastern Mediterranean, the Suez Canal and to the Middle East.

In this case, also, the contribution of the Hellenic Territory in maintaining open the vital lines of sea transportation from Europe to the Middle East and the Arabian Gulf, is of great and significant importance, especially considering its capability to provide staging areas for equipment.

CHAPTER II

STRATEGIC VALUE OF GREECE

1. Preface

The strategic evaluation of any territory does not merely depend on its geographic configuration. In the present situation it is mostly influenced by geopolitical conditions and the availability of new equipment, i.e. nuclear weapons. Therefore, any conclusions should be reviewed according to the new data concerning the evaluation of Hellenic space. In view of the fact that international strategy within NATO has been substituted for operational strategy, this procedure becomes increasingly imperative. Thus, further study of the Hellenic Territory in view of the new data is required in order to form its exact strategic value within NATO. For the purposes of better understanding and analysis, this territory is considered in connection with the Mediterranean Sea and the Balkan bridge-head of NATO in order to draw the necessary conclusions. The strategic evaluation of the Southeastern Area of NATO will be seriously affected in the future by the Yugoslavian factor after Tito's death, the significant and dramatic changes in Eastern Europe and especially in Romania and Bulgaria and the events in the Middle East.

The above facts must be taken under consideration by the planners of NATO strategy owing that it will give new dimensions to the defensive problem of NATO in the area.

2. Evaluation of Eastern Mediterranean Sea

a. The strategic value of the Mediterranean might be very important since:

(1) It is the maritime chain connecting Europe with Asia and Africa.

(2) It exits into the Atlantic Ocean from the Straits of Gibraltar, and into the Indian Ocean from Suez Canal and the Red Sea.

(3) It is the main road for international transportation from the Atlantic to the Indian and Pacific Oceans; furthermore, it is a much shorter route than that sailing around South Africa.

(4) It is the principal route for transporting oil from Middle East to Europe.

(5) It enables the power dominating it to execute manoeuvres and move forces in any direction.

(6) It facilitates the power controlling it to conduct operations against Europe, The Middle East and Northern Africa.

b. If we suppose that the form of a future war will be an all-out one with increasingly effective means, then the factor of movement (either to transfer kill-power or to contribute in the overall war economy) would be of great importance, since losses are anticipated in a

short time and the new techniques require more material in a shorter period of time. The meaning of movement is expressed by the term "communications". This general term mainly means maritime communications and land transport. This is so since in an all-out war the bulk of the transport is served by sea (the land transport is the continuation of the maritime one) and the air transport represents a low percentage of the total. The present conditions indicate that the Mediterranean not only offers all the above-mentioned strategic advantages but furthermore it enlarges them. Thus it influences strategy much more extensively, because of the requirements of modern techniques, tactics, and the war economy. Furthermore, since oil is the most essential strategic supply, and the Middle East its greatest producer, the Mediterranean affects the neighbouring countries (i.e. Southern Europe, Northern Africa and the Middle East) and Europe in general. This influence is due to the fact that the ruler of this sea could control the aforementioned areas and thus exploit the most economical route so as to gain access to the oil in the Middle East. Thus, it should be considered as a road suitable for the transportation of forces to different theatres of action and also as a route of potential war value.

c. In case of a possible Soviet or Soviet - Supported military action with nuclear weapons or not, although today the use of the nuclear weapons has considerably diminished, the Mediterranean South Region could help the European front by counter offensive actions (using either conventional or nuclear weapons) through the Hellenic

Territory, which can be used as a base to conduct operations for a diversionary move, in order to threaten the flank of the enemy forces operating in Europe, as it occurred during World War I, and as espoused by Mr. Churchill during World War II.

d. The Strait of Gibraltar, Sicily-Tunis, Otranto and Turkey as well as the Suez Canal, still remain the vulnerable points in the Mediterranean.

e. The strategic importance of the Mediterranean, and subsequently of the Hellenic territory, is increased by the fact that the Soviet Block, especially the U.S.S.R., have repeatedly made efforts to gain a foothold in this warm sea. During the Second World War, Stalin's maneuvers enabled Russia to succeed in these intentions:

- (1) To avoid any allied landing on the Balkan peninsula.
- (2) To instigate an attack against Greece, aiming at obtaining an outlet in the Mediterranean.
- (3) To create the nucleus of her Balkan Empire.
- (4) To control this large area and exploit it as a base for psychological warfare operations and subversive activities, as the case might be, in order to undermine and paralyze NATO in this vital region of Southern Europe.

3. Strategic Evaluation of the Hellenic Peninsula

a. Land Space

The Hellenic territory:

(1) Is situated on the cross-roads between Europe, Asia, and Africa.

(2) Controls the Eastern Mediterranean basin covering it from the North. Moreover, it protects the shortest sea route from Western Europe to the Indian and Pacific Oceans via the Suez Canal.

(3) It permits from its northerly position the complete domination of the Eastern Mediterranean, and consequently allows for the further operations against the Middle East and North Africa.

(4) In case the ruler of Central and Eastern Europe, Ukrania, and Transcaucasia is willing to threaten the communications in the Mediterranean and hence to secure a free exit to the south from such closed water-ways as the Adriatic and the Black Seas, the Hellenic Peninsula in combination with the sea and air hellenic space could:

Make this exit possible.

Provides him with bases to clear the way for further operations against Western, Southern, and Eastern targets.

Offers him the tactical advantage of conducting a manoeuvre in order to outflank the Turkish Straits from the West and avoid a direct attack. It is well understood that a frontal operation against the Straits would be vulnerable from both, mass-destruction and conventional weapons; besides special operations and force concentrations in a limited area would be required;

(5) Secures the right flank of the Alliance and facilitates any allied flank-attack against the Soviet forces operating in Central Europe.

(6) Covers Turkey from the West and enables the defense of the Straits by combined operations from Thrace and the Aegean Islands.

(7) Affects the four sensitive Mediterranean positions (i.e. the Straits in Sicily-Tunis, Otranto and Turkey and the Suez Canal)- this influence is increased as far as the most effective modern (nuclear) weapons and launching techniques are concerned.

(8) Is the road which provides Turkey with supplies and connects her with Italy.

b. Sea Space

(1) The Hellenic sea-space, i.e. the Ionian, Aegean, and Cretan seas and the Hellenic islands, are the vital sea-space for the Eastern Mediterranean.

(2) Operating from the Ionian Sea even with limited means, we can, because of its central position, dominate the Straits of Otranto, and the straits between Sicily and Tunis.

(3) The Aegean Sea is the vital sea-space for the Turkish Straits and is the space which in combination with the Cretan Sea, provides a power sailing from them, excellent advantages in successfully controlling the Suez Canal.

(4) The Cretan Sea supports and complements the capabilities offered by the Ionian and Aegean Seas; naval forces from Cretan bases could initiate operations to dominate the Eastern Mediterranean.

(5) The Hellenic islands, including Crete, provide natural dispersion and, combined with the Hellenic Peninsula, considerably enlarge the tactical importance of the Hellenic Sea; in fact they:

(a) facilitate the naval forces in conducting various operations.

(b) Help land, and air forces to support the naval forces.

(c) Extend the Hellenic mainland and facilitate any special operation (amphibious landing).

(d) The sea triangle of Pylos-Crete and the Dodecanese islands is of great strategic importance as it constitutes a chain denying any exit of the Soviet fleet into the Mediterranean. The Dodecanese are suitable for submarine bases in order to control the eastern basin of the Mediterranean.

c. Air Space

The capabilities, available to a power controlling the Hellenic air-space, are as follows:

(1) Turn to her account the strategic and tactical advantages offered by the Hellenic ground and sea-space.

(2) Provide security and have the capability of reinforcing the land and naval forces.

(3) In combination with the land and naval spaces the Hellenic air space is a good warning system and a shield of vital areas.

4. Strategic Evaluation of the Balkan Bridge-Head Within NATO -

 The Hellenic Contribution

a. To evaluate the Hellenic contribution in NATO's defense it is imperative to analyze in detail the importance of the Balkan bridge-head for the overall interdependence of the Balkan territories ie Greece and Turkey.

b. In case that Western Europe was considered from a military point of view in a Soviet campaign plan, she would be configurated as an extension of the Asian mainland; as an Asian island. NATO would appear to be her hard core, which might obviously attract any planning.

The Soviets should launch a major strike to destroy this core. Furthermore, two strategic axes envelop and isolate from North to South this strong core. These axes could serve in support of the main offensive effort against Western Europe.

The southern axis which concerns us is important. It runs from the critical and sensitive areas in Southeastern Russia canalizing forces along two axes to reach other vital regions. The first axis leads to the Turkish Straits and the neighbouring Hellenic territories while the second leads to the Middle East. The expansionist Soviet territorial tendencies, along these two axes, have always been the main national goal; regardless of their existing political regimes.

Such efforts to achieve an exit into the Mediterranean have in the past been noted: The Soviets have been implementing their plan to increase their fleet in the Black Sea and they have interfered in the internal affairs of various countries (i.e. Greece and Iran) to overturn the existing regimes. They have also pressed Turkey to change her political orientation and they have repeatedly expressed the intention to penetrate into the Middle East and North Africa.

Also the events in the Middle East give persuasive evidence that the Soviet aim to obtain an outlet into the Mediterranean rests unchanged.

An enemy operation along the southern axis could subsequently envelop Western Europe and result in achieving the aim intended. Nevertheless, this axis could also serve in an allied counter-offensive role, i.e. for planning and launching counter-offensive operations in order to create a threat against the flank of a Soviet advance through Western Europe.

c. Thus, let us examine how and where the southern flank of NATO could contribute in applying the principle of interdependence. An enemy advance along the southern strategic axis would be blocked in the Balkan Peninsula by a bridge-head consisting of the Hellenic mainland and the Aegean islands, as well as the Turkish territories on both sides of the Straits. This bridge-head, geographically indivisible and united

could be used for two different purposes: First, as a bulwark to block any enemy operation against the Mediterranean and the Middle East; Second, as a base to launch counter-offensive operations against the soft belly of the opposing forces. Both these purposes could be implemented if this bridge-head is considered to be indivisible. At the time being, the Turkish Straits are a vital area if their close geographic configuration and the potential nuclear exchange are taken into account? It could be said that the defense of the Straits from both the West and the Southwest depends on the Hellenic territory (i.e. the bridge-head of Drama, Kavala, and Alexandroupolis, as well as the Aegean islands). Actually, an enemy attack against the Turkish Straits, from Bulgaria along the Evros river and supported by nuclear weapons situated in Southeastern Bulgaria, could rapidly result in the occupation of Istanbul and Callipoli (Figure 1). If NATO maintains the West Thracian bridge-heads and initiates combined operations from them and the Aegean islands, against the enemy flank, the attack against the Straits could be blocked. In such a case, many enemy forces should be assigned to cover their western flank. As a result the enemy would be obliged to reduce the forces operating against the Straits. Thus, the above reasoning leads to two conclusions.

First, the Turkish Straits, because of nuclear weapons, are no longer a cross-road for various intercontinental itineraries, but an obstacle blocking them. Second, the effective defense of the Turkish Straits is dependent on the existence of appropriate land bases near

this area (strategic valve of the bridge-head in Western Thrace). An enemy attack against the straits should also be considered possible. Such an aggression might in the first phase be intended to separate the Hellenic from the Turkish forces (sketch 1). In the second phase the enemy forces would try to occupy the European coast of the Straits but they would be met there with strong and decisive counter offensive actions launched from bases situated on the Aegean islands. Therefore, the Enemy would have to realize that such numerous casualties as he would suffer to occupy the Aegean Islands and the Asian coast of the Straits (if airborne units were engaged) could not result in achieving their purpose of gaining an exit into Mediterranean. The Hellenic islands in the Aegean Sea extending to Crete, could be the barrier to maintain the Straits as an obstacle. In this case any movement of enemy land and naval forces to the south is blocked due to the existence of bases in the Aegean Islands, permitting the launching of nuclear fires (if absolutely necessary) which there now under NATO control in Greece and Turkey.

This probable enemy action leads to the conclusion that the role of the Straits is limited to that of an obstacle and that the strategic value of the Islands is considerably increased because of the influence they exercise in the defense of the Straits. Furthermore, they might be used as a blocking system to any further enemy attack to the South, if the Straits were to be occupied.

In a case that the enemy would launch an attack against Western Europe, while adopting a defensive or covering attitude in our Peninsula, the Balkan bridge-head of NATO could successfully accomplish its defensive and deterrent mission, if its depth is extended to the North. In fact, the opponent could not have the capabilities to conduct any simultaneous operations against Greece and/or Turkey, since the mass of his forces would be operating in one theatre, while the remaining would be exhausted in covering them.

The Southern strategic axis Greece-Bulgaria-Ukraine would be better exploited aiming at reinforcing the main effort of NATO in Western Europe, if offensive operations to the North would combined with nuclear strikes. Therefore, the Balkan bridge-head is an area in which NATO's shield can be converted into a sword. The war could be escalated to Soviet territories. Thus, the depth of the Balkan bridge-head would be extended to the North, securing a large base for counter offensive operations against the flank of enemy forces attacking Western Europe. As a result the burden of enemy pressure against Western Europe could be considerably weakened. Vulnerable points of this bridge-head are its small depth, the sensitivity of Thrace and Macedonia, and the dependence of the overall defense of the area from the direction of Yugoslavia.

5. Yugoslavian Factor

Another serious element that must be taken into account in this

analysis is the presence of Warsaw Pact forces against the frontiers of Yugoslavia. This presence of forces diminishes the importance of the strategic axis S. Russia-Straits in relationship to the past and gives more strategic value to the axis Yugoslavia-Greece-Mediterranean for NATO.

Greece, pertaining to NATO, contributes essentially by the doctrine of the forward strategy of NATO in the South-eastern area, to reinforce the strong will of Yugoslavia to remain neutral and independent: that is also the official policy of USA and NATO.

Yugoslavia will also feel an additional security from the South and an open door to breathe the air from the West. So Greece will be the pivot point where in the south region of NATO the doctrine of forward strategy can be exploited to the maximum to the benefit of NATO because it covers the invasion axis from Yugoslavia and secures the defense of the Straits from the bridge-heads of Western Thrace and the Aegean islands as it has been clearly explained (strategic value of Greek Sea space and Ionian sea). So we feel that the pending reorganization of the southeastern region is sound, as it happens in Central Europe, because it will facilitate much better the operational control in the vital region of South-Europe. Also we must not forget that the strategic axis Yugoslavia-Greece leads more rapidly than any other axis of this region can, to the East Mediterranean and North Africa (one turning movement from Bulgaria through the Stroumnitsa

valley which converging following the Axios valley leads to Thessaloniki. Another from Perlep-Monastirion to Florina-Kalapaca-Larissa) (See Figure 2).

6. The Importance and Extent of Greek Contribution in the South-

Eastern Wing of NATO

The analysis of the role of the Greek peninsula in this delicate area, in relation to the factors of the Mediterranean Sea and the Balkan bridgehead, shows the great importance and the contribution of Greece to the delicate South-eastern wing for the maintenance of peace and stability in the aforementioned area. Thus, one asks, what value (effectiveness) would the defenses of NATO have in the Southeastern wing if Greece were to come under Communist control or if the West was to lose Greece by some other way? The following are some of the serious consequences the defense of NATO will have to face in the above area.

a. Turkey would be isolated if her communications were cut off; such a development could seriously affect her effective defense.

b. The Turkish Straits might easily come under Soviet control; in such a case, NATO would have to transfer its defensive positions and organize new positions on the threat of the Soviet fleet of the Black Sea;

c. Yugoslavia, if not already overrun, would be in a very difficult position and the Italian peninsula would become the single NATO element in the Southern flank.

d. The enemy would destroy the forward early warning and RADAR systems installed in Greece. With forward air and naval bases in Greece he would be capable of cutting off and destroying all convoys which might try to pass between Greece and North Africa.

e. The eventual aggressor would deeply penetrate into the Mediterranean and make it impossible for any communication between the Eastern and Western Mediterranean.

f. The whole defense in the South-east area would collapse since the defense of the Straits and Western Turkey would become difficult. And this is because flank attacks would be launched against these areas from the bridge-heads of western Thrace and the Aegean Islands.

g. The defense of the Middle East would be vitally endangered, and NATO could not interfere to protect the sea-communications or to supply and support the forces operating in the Middle East.

h. The West could no longer dominate the Mediterranean. Such a development would critically affect the defense in the Middle East and North Africa (See figure 3).

CHAPTER III

THE STRATEGIC ROLE OF GREECE

1. The Role of Greece in the Global Strategic System

But what will be the role of Greece in the global strategic system that is likely to evolve in the ten years which remain until the dawn of the 21st century?

Greece is the 89th largest, 61st most populous and 37th richest country in the world. It ranks 33rd on the Physical Quality of Life index. 24th on the index of Net Social Progress and 30th on the combined Economic and Social Indicators scale. Its GNP per capita annual growth rate had been running for many years at around 2-3 per cent and its population growth rate at 0.6 per cent. It ranks 27th on defense expenditures as percentage of GNP and 13th in soldier/civilian ratio. The Greek flag flies over the world's largest merchant marine fleet (not counting flags of convenience). The Greeks are the 10th highest consumers of fruit, third highest consumers of vegetables and rank ninth in daily protein consumption. Other 'distinctions' include 10th ranking in the numbers of hotel beds, eighth in number of physicians, seventh in cigarette production and second in study abroad.

Greece is a country which, together with Portugal, Spain, France, Italy and Turkey, forms a vital strategic chain extending from the shores of the Atlantic Ocean to the oil-rich Middle East.

Another very vital strategic function is that Greece, together with Italy, guards the approaches to the Adriatic. The importance of this function would be substantially enhanced should the Soviet Union ever secure access to the Adriatic through Yugoslavia and Albania.

The increasing emphasis that will be placed on the deterrent value of naval forces traversing the Mediterranean and the North Sea once the impact of the INF Treaty is fully felt, will clearly enhance Greece's role in the Western Alliance. Crete's - especially Souda Bay's - contribution to the naval activities of NATO and national forces will remain of central importance. Crete, the fifth largest island in the Mediterranean, is 480 kms (300 miles) from the Straits, 320 kms (200 miles) from Suez and 240 kms (150 miles) from the Libyan coast.

Greece's armed forces are in a very high state of readiness. The country currently holds the second highest record in military spending as percentage of GDP, in the Western Alliance. Its regular armed forces amounting to 209,000 men and women, constitute the highest military/civilian ratio in NATO. Conscription in the military services, averaging 22 months, is the longest among NATO member states. Despite the staggering costs, a systematic effort to maintain the standards of modernization

in defense procurement programs has been continuing for the past fifteen years, since the fall of the dictatorship in 1974. The recent purchase of modern F-16 and Mirage 2000 aircraft highlights this type of commitment.

We should stress, however, that the composite strategic weight of the vital Greek-Turkish geostrategic area will be decisively enhanced when the chronic problems that have divided these two NATO allies are amicably and fairly settled. It is therefore encouraging that major moves between the Prime Ministers of Greece and Turkey in the first half of 1988 are under way in this direction. One could wish here for a more active NATO role in the peaceful settlement process of these and similar disputes that will occasionally arise within the Alliance. An institutionalized intra-Alliance dispute settlement mechanism has indeed been long overdue. The procedure, naturally, would start from the premise that the use of force as an instrument for the settlement of disputes is unthinkable within NATO.

The strategic role and value of a state cannot, however, be assessed by the mere presentation of objective/quantitative variables of size, geographic location, population, military and economic capabilities and so forth. Ultimately, the net value of a country in the Western Alliance is modified upward or downward according to qualitative variables, such as policy continuity, viability of pluralistic democratic institutions,

respect for individual and collective human rights and resolve to defend democratic values individually and in concert with like-minded nations.

Greece after 1974, following the collapse of an ineffective and adventurist military dictatorship, began what has proven to be a new and stable era in its much-troubled 20th century history. Rapid rates of economic growth experienced in the 1950s and 1960s, and the resultant urbanization, have created social and economic conditions sufficient to sustain a genuine multi-party system which guarantees respect for human rights and civil liberties. Two major parties - right and left of centre respectively - have alternated in power since 1974 applying variants of Keynesian economic policies and adopting, despite the diversity of their ideological proclamations, a set of foreign policies that have been characterized by continuity rather than change.

In sum, Greece has adopted with nearly consensual support, the profile of a typical West European State. Entry into the European Community which in the late 1970s was heatedly debated, became the Centrepiece of Greece's Foreign Policy, fitting well the country's stable Democratic Orientation.

2. National Defense Policy

Greece's national defense policy could be summarized as follows:

- a. Greece is dedicated to the principles of Democracy, Peace,

Security and International Cooperation without interfering in the internal affairs of other countries. She respects and observes the principles of the United Nations Charter, the Helsinki Final Act as well as her commitments deriving from international law, treaties and agreements.

b. Greece supports the principles of peaceful settlement of disputes with neighbouring countries on the basis of the established international law, rules and practice.

c. Greece attaches particular emphasis to the promotion of the European cooperation on security matters and the maintenance of the balance of forces at the lowest possible level.

d. Greece wishes to develop good relations with all countries regardless of their social or political system, provided that there is a sincere response. In applying this policy, Greece has succeeded in establishing good relations with all neighbouring countries.

e. The responsibility for the National Defense Policy rests with the Government that determines the Defense Policy of the country. The implementing body for this policy is the Ministry of National Defense. Subordinate to this Ministry are the National Defense General Staff and three Services Staffs of the Army, Navy and Air Force. The National Defense General Staff is the highest coordinating body of the Armed Forces, which directs operations in wartime.

CHAPTER IV
-----ASCERTAINMENTS AND CONCLUSIONS
-----1. Generalities

This study has been an attempt to analyze the strategic value of the Hellenic peninsula within NATO. The predominant data have been discussed and the important role of Greece within the NATO framework has been proved. To successfully accomplish this role, the strategic value of the Hellenic territory, as analyzed above, should be exploited. This territory has been the "apple of discord" between the two blocs. (Exit into the Mediterranean has been a permanent goal of the Communist Bloc while the Free World has expressed a strong decision to maintain its dominant position in the Mediterranean). The following general ascertainment and conclusions summarize the great advantages that the Atlantic Alliance could attain if the Hellenic factor was fully exploited.

2. Ascertainments

a. The Hellenic peninsula is the outpost of NATO in this area and close enough to strategic targets of NATO within the Soviet bloc territory. It offers excellent bases to conduct counter-offensive operations and it permits the launching of nuclear strikes from floating bases in the Hellenic sea space against vital targets of potential enemies.

b. The Hellenic peninsula is the main basis to maintain the Balkan bridge-head of NATO in the South-eastern area if the Western powers lose Greece.

The Soviet block could exit into the Mediterranean sea. Turkey would be isolated and the Arab countries directly affected. The Middle-East would be lost to the West. The axis to Italy and the West Mediterranean would be cleared. The defense of Italy seriously affected, and Turkey could be neutralized while suffering complete encirclement.

c. On the other hand if we suppose that the Hellenic peninsula is maintained by NATO and the Straits are occupied by the eventual aggressor, this event could not result in the liberation of the maritime route Straits-Aegean-Mediterranean because it is possible to support Turkey from the bridgeheads of Western Thrace and the complex of the Aegean islands.

d. The Hellenic peninsula, in connection with nuclear weapons having greater effectiveness and range, covers and affects in greater depth that could be afforded before vulnerable and sensitive areas to NATO interests i.e. Straits of Sicily-Italy, straits of Otranto, straits of Elisfontos, and the Suez Canal.

e. The Hellenic peninsula is the main basic which can convert the NATO shield into a lance by creating counter-offensive operations against the soft-belly of the enemy operations in western Europe.

f. Greece is the pivot point of NATO in the south because:

(1) The doctrine of the forward strategy in this area can be exploited to the maximum benefit of NATO.

(2) The strategic axis from Yugoslavia to Greece, Mediterranean could be better covert and protected in the long term. Tito's death creates major problems to NATO planners to meet any challenge from the direction Yugoslavia-Greece-Mediterranean (see strategy value of Greek sea space in connection with Ionian sea). A new organization of Commands of NATO south could provide better and more suitable prerequisites to meet any aggression in the Southern region of NATO.

3. Conclusions

a. It is necessary for NATO to exploit the strategic value of the Hellenic space that would most contribute in securing the double role of the Balkan bridge-head (contiguity with the Turkish Straits).

b. It is essential to develop and organize the complex of the Aegean islands which are most suitable for defending the Straits and blocking any further entries of Soviet submarines in the Mediterranean in case the Straits are surrendered.

c. It is necessary to further exploit the Cretan - Dodecanese - Pylos triangle which is suitable for bases to control the basin of the Eastern Mediterranean.

d. It is necessary to reorganize the southern flank of NATO so as to give greater flexibility in order to better confront the Yugoslavian factor by creating three separate commands. As is the case in the Central European command of NATO.

In this manner each country (Italy, Greece, Turkey) will assume the responsibility of defending its own territory.

e. It is necessary to give particular emphasis in developing a common nuclear strategy within the framework of NATO, one which would have greater cohesion and parity between the European members and the U.S. As a consequence this will have a strengthening of the forward strategy of NATO by modifying the doctrine of flexible response.

For each NATO member every threat is vital and none will accept to be sacrificed as a new Korea - and furthermore it will refuse to be sacrificed for a war waged with conventional weapons which will have minimal chances of success. This, since both sides possess nuclear weapons and nuclear strategy dominates while conventional strategy is secondary and supplementary.

f. It is important to emphasize that a potential attack against the Southeastern Region could not result in a local war, moreover, it would be met with a direct retaliation carried out by such NATO forces as necessary. This prerequisite is of particular importance given that:

(1) The Balkan and the Mediterranean have always been within the Russian goals;

(2) These areas were theatres of conflict during both World Wars.

(3) The Soviet Union has established her small empire in the Balkans just for this end, i.e., to use this region as a base for offensive activities intending to undermine and paralyze the Atlantic Alliance in the vital area of Southeastern Europe.

(4) A collective NATO defense in this area should convince any aggressor that any attack launched by him would be met with a direct and immediate engagement of collective NATO forces, which, if required, might use nuclear weapons. An action against Macedonia and/or Thrace would not be limited to Hellenic Forces, but would involve NATO responsibility. An explicit NATO statement would discourage any opponent and would be the best deterrent.

4. General Conclusion

After the above considerations we can conclude, without any doubt, that THE STRATEGIC VALUE OF GREECE HAS ABSOLUTELY NOT BEEN CHANGED. On the contrary, it has been enhanced significantly. Particularly the role of Greece becomes of great importance in controlling and coordinating the Sea and Air Transportations after the expected increase in the relations and trade with the countries of Eastern Europe and Soviet Union.

Greece also plays an effective role in linking Western Europe with the countries of North Africa and Middle East.

Greece is constantly striving for a re-approachment of the two Blocks, the normalization of relations among various countries and the development of friendly and peaceful bonds among all people.

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